

PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Milestone of 500,000 Acres of Private Forests Under Sustainable Management Plans

**Efforts Support Wildlife Habitat, Climate Change Resiliency, and
Outdoor Recreation**

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ATHOL — Continuing its commitment to increasing the quality of sustainable management of Commonwealth forests, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced that it has reached the 500,000 acre milestone for private forests enrolled in Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) [Forest Stewardship Program](/service-details/forest-stewardship-program). The 500,000 acres represents 25% of all private forests across the state and nearly 800 square miles of land. The program supports and encourages private forest landowners' efforts to manage, their forest using a long-term sustainable approach.

“By partnering with private land owners, the Baker-Polito Administration is able to ensure sustainable forest management practices are implemented within the state’s widespread, vital forest land,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “The benefits of well-managed forestry plans provide both immediate and long-term dividends in safeguarding our environment, and I am so proud of the hard work of the many individuals who have helped reach this incredible 500,000 acre milestone.”

The benefits of sustainable forest management practices include better habitat for wildlife, the protection of public drinking water supplies, making forests more resilient to the impacts of climate change, and the creation of sustainable jobs within rural communities. Importantly, each acre of forest removes one to two tons of carbon dioxide each year.

Recognizing the benefits a well-managed forest can have on local communities, regional areas, and throughout the Commonwealth, the Baker-Polito Administration increased funding for the Working Forest Initiative from \$500,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 to \$750,000 in Fiscal Year 2019. To reach the 500,000 acre milestone, the DCR has funded nearly 2,000 forest plans and added approximately 200,000 acres into the Forest Stewardship Program, which connects landowners with local foresters to implement plans and meet shared goals.

By participating, private landowners will develop a ten year forest management plan, or a Forest Stewardship Plan, based on goals for the property. The Forest Stewardship Plan documents options and best management practices that will lead to a productive and healthy forest for the next generation. Soil and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat,

timber and other wood products, as well as, outdoor recreation are among the many factors taken into account when developing the Forest Stewardship Plan. The plan also recommends actions that will protect or increase the environmental values of the forest, while providing social or economic benefits.

“Massachusetts has wonderful natural resources and the proper, sustainable management of our forest by professional foresters working with landowners and state agencies will assure that current forestry will help to assure that trees will be here for future generations,” **said State Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer)**. “Our forests provide a plethora of benefits from conservation of soil, air, and water to providing habitat for flora, fauna and many species of birds and wildlife.”

Good forestry management practices also support over 4,000 sustainable jobs in rural communities due to:

- The hiring of professional foresters;
- The harvesting of renewable forest products; and,
- The processing of wood at facilities, such as sawmills and wood manufacturing businesses.

Currently, there are thousands of private forest landowners who collectively own approximately two thirds of Massachusetts’ forest lands. The private landowners serve as the primary caretakers of some of the Commonwealth’s most precious and dynamic natural resources, and by working together, future generations will benefit from today’s forest management practices.

To learn more about forest management practices offered by EEA and DCR, please visit the DCR’s [website\(/orgs/departments/department-of-conservation-recreation/\)](https://www.dcr.state.ma.us/orgs/departments/department-of-conservation-recreation/).

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (</orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs>)

EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

More (</orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs>)



**Department of Conservation &
Recreation** (</orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation>)

DCR manages state parks and oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts. It protects, promotes, and enhances the state's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

More (</orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation>)